AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 18 as follows:

Referring now to FIG. 11, the unreacted portion of the TiAl layer, that is the portion of layer 80 overlying diffusion layer 82, is next stripped away from the diffusion layer 82 by means of CMP, a wet etch process, or even a dry etch process. The remaining layer 82 could be further annealed in an NH_3 ambient, in a rapid thermal anneal (RTA) chamber, at a temperature of approximately 350° C. to 550° C., so to form a Ti—Al—N compound. The formation of this compound is achieved in approximately 5 minutes. This way, the second anneal step transforms layer 82 of FIG. 11 into a nitrogen containing layer 83 of FIG. 12. The new nitrogen-containing layer 83 is more effective as a diffusion barrier than the titanium-aluminum-copper layer 82. The surface alloying of the copper with the titanium and aluminum retains the low resistivity of the copper, while affording passivation of copper surfaces. Passivation of copper layer 26 through the nitrogen-containing layer 83 results in copper oxide film 85 on the surface of the nitrogen-containing layer 83. This occurs by a process similar to that shown in FIG. 8.